



U8-U14 Defending

Category: Tactical: Defensive principles

Difficulty: Beginner

Gonzalo Sanchez

Warmup (5 mins)

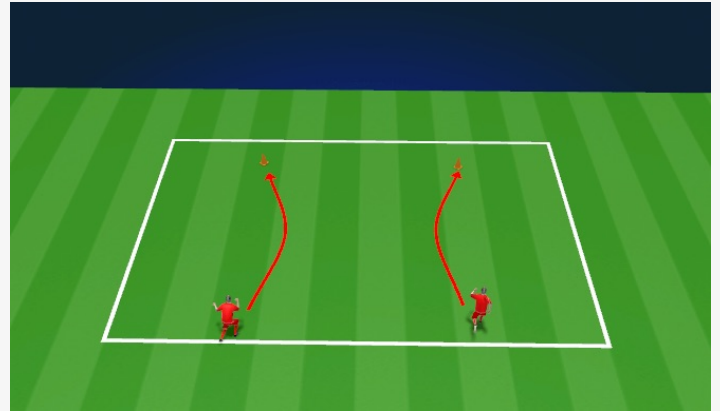
Warmup

Setup a cone 10 yards away from where players start. Players should work on coming out to approach the cone (attacker) in a good defensive shape then shuffle feet going backwards 3 times each direction keeping a good defensive shape. A few repetitions of this will suffice.

What to look for: Fast to slow approach, side ways and low ready to change your defensive stance if attacker switches sides. Curved run in to take something away and force the attacker to one side.

Coaching points:

- First defender that approaches attacker with the ball is known as “pressure”
- Fast slow sideways and low! Repeat it so they lock it in their mind.
- Curve your run. Force attacker into less space or take an option away to make it easier for you in a 1v1.
- Slow down as you get close to attacker, coming in too fast and not slowing down will allow a fast attacker to blow past you easily.



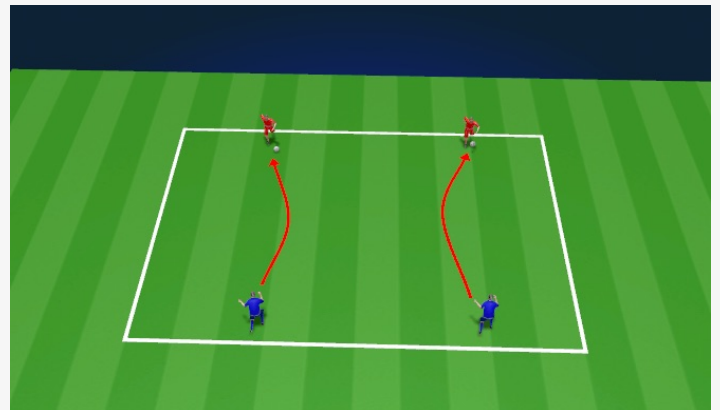
Defending 1v1 (5 mins)

Defending 1v1

Players should be 10 yards apart, defender plays the ball out to the attacker and immediately defends using the principals we talked about in the warmup. Attacker should not try to beat the defender, just try to make defender switch his feet and work on his defensive shape as he moves backwards. Players do the same thing on the way back but roles switch (defender becomes the attacker). A few repetitions of this will suffice then you can try going to full on 1v1 with attacker really trying to beat the defender into space or to goal.

Coaching points:

- Same as points from warmup
- If attacker takes a big touch get your body in between him and the ball
- Be physical but don't extend your arm
- Be patient and look for a mistake: big touch, bobbling the ball during dribble, etc.



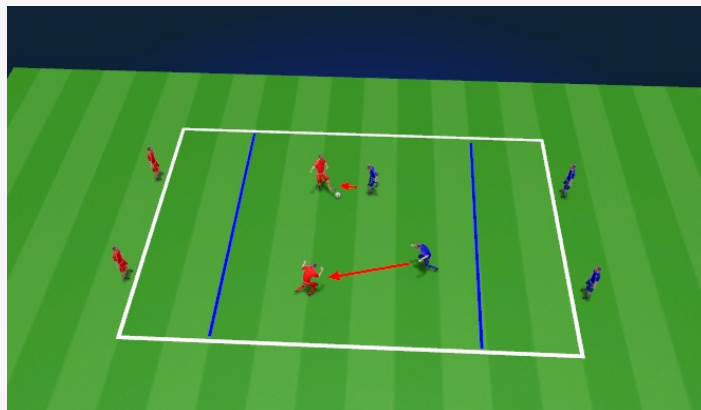
Defending 2v2 (5 mins)

Defending 2v2

Players can play regular 2v2 to get into a space to score or to goals. Pressure should be the first defender closest to the ball. Second defender is known as the “cover”, trying to cover space or the next available passing option closest to the player. Cover should be staggered/diagonal from the pressure (1st defender) and NOT flat (straight line/horizontal from 1st defender). Cover the space behind as to not get beat but close enough to pressure the next available passing option or double if the 1st defender is beaten.

Coaching points:

- Stay staggered
- Communicate who needs to pressure and who is cover (this may change as passes are made or as attacker dribbles)
- Check your shoulder to ensure your cover defender is helping as necessary (in game you do not want to go pressure on your own as this can make it easy for opponent to pass around you or beat you 1v1 especially if you are coming in late).



Defending 3v3 (10 mins)

Defending 3v3

Pressure and cover have been talked about and now balance is the last thing left. While cover will be the closest available options (can be 1, 2, or even 3 passing options closest), the balance is in charge of weak side coverage. This would be the defender(s) furthest from the ball whether it's a winger or outside back on opposing side of the field. This can be seen and worked on in a 3v3 at a smaller scale but more so seen in a 4v4-7v7 full game scenario so its good to talk about this in both a small and larger setting. In a 3v3 this player would be monitoring the extra attacker that could be making runs in behind. It's important that the balance stays connected with their team and doesn't leave space open for a through ball. Stay aware of the off ball runs in order to transition to becoming the pressure if the ball is played to their side.

Coaching points:

- Stay alert and focused as this defender is usually not immediately affecting the ball/play directly.
- Scan and monitor off ball movement
- Close gaps - stay connected to the rest of your team while still paying attention to runs on your side.

